

# Africa:

The ecology of this exhibit comes from a wide variety of environments, ranging from desert to tropics and everything in between (savannahs and jungles).

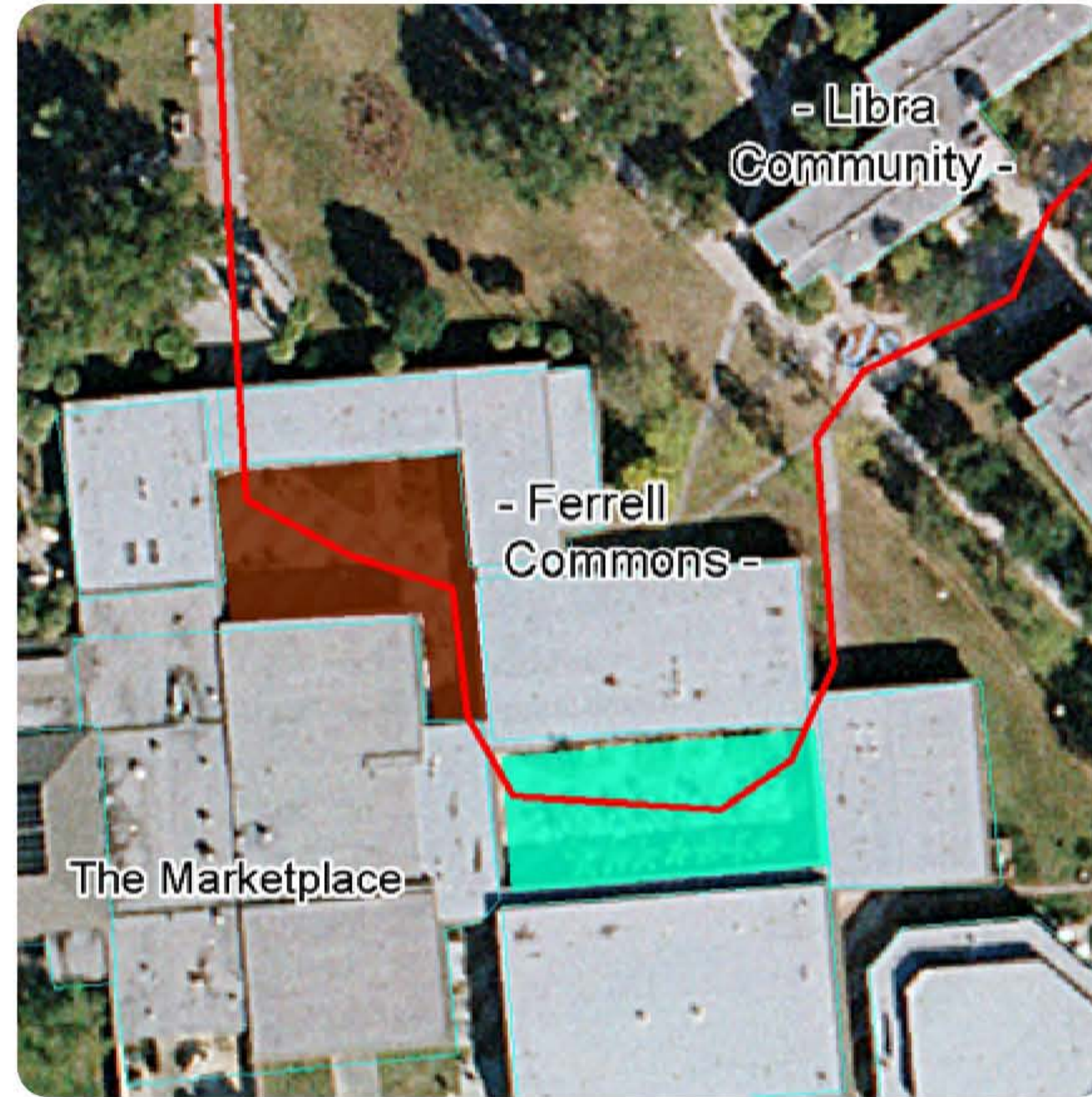
**Aloe** *Aloe ciliaris, arborescens, saponaria, barbadensis*

This genus contains about 400 species of flowering succulent plants. It is most common in South Africa's Cape Province.

A few species have been used traditionally as an herbal medicine. Most popularly used is *aloe vera*. The Greeks and Romans used aloe to treat wounds. Aloe vera is still in use today for soothing minor burns, wounds, and various skin conditions like eczema and ringworm. The gel's effect is nearly immediate; it also applies a layer over wounds that is said to reduce the chance of any infection.

**Bird of Paradise** *Strelitzia reginae*

This native to South Africa has a hard, beak-like sheath from which the flower emerges is termed the *spathe*. It is placed perpendicular to the stem, which gives it the appearance of a bird's head and beak; making a durable perch for holding the sunbirds that pollinate the flowers.



The flowers consist of three brilliant orange sepals and three purplish-blue petals. Two of the blue petals are joined together to form an arrow-like nectary. When the sunbirds sit to drink the nectar, the petals open to cover their feet in pollen

## Lily of the Nile

*Agapanthus africanus*  
(African lily; syn.

*Agapanthus umbellatus*) is a member of the Alliaceae or onion family, and a native of the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. During the summer they require plenty of water and are very effective on the margins of lakes or by running streams, where they thrive. They may be propagated from offsets or by dividing the rootstock in early spring or autumn.